

NORFOLK ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

Report No. 820

**An Archaeological Excavation at
'Whistle Stop', The Green, Aldborough, Norfolk**

38186 ALD

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Local Authority No.076759

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Location: 'Whistle Stop', The Green, Aldborough, Norfolk
Grid Ref: TG 1850 3430
HER No.: 38186 ALD
Date of Fieldwork: 9th April 2003

Summary

An archaeological excavation of footing trenches to the rear of a private dwelling in Aldborough, Norfolk was undertaken. Topsoil and subsoil deposits were found that appeared to have been deliberately laid, to build up the ground to the rear of the house, after the building was erected in c.1850. The only evidence for cultural activity recorded was a pit ([3]) which cut through the top-soil ([1]) and sub-soil ([2]) deposits and contained pottery and glass dating from the 19th century.

1.0 Introduction

An archaeological excavation to the rear of 'Whistle Stop', a private dwelling adjacent to The Green, Aldborough, Norfolk, was undertaken. This comprised the examination of footing trenches for a proposed extension to the house, totalling an area of 8m by 4m. The trenches were bounded to the north by the house, to the south by garden and to the east and west by property boundaries.

The work was commissioned by the owner of the property, Mr G. Durrant.

This archaeological excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Brief issued by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology (NLA Ref: AJRH 25/02/03) and a Method Statement prepared by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit (NAU Ref: MS/Eval/JB/1546).

The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, following the guidelines set out in *Planning and Policy Guidance 16 — Archaeology and Planning* (Department of the Environment 1990). The results will enable decisions to be made by the Local Planning Authority with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.

The site archive is currently held by the Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service, following the relevant policy on archiving standards.

2.0 Geology and Topography

The underlying solid geology is Upper Chalk which is covered by Norwich Brickearth glacial drift. There are alluvial river deposits in the area of the village due to various watercourses in the vicinity and the soils mainly consist of rich loams with outcrops of sand and clay. The subsoil is a mid grey sandy silt while the topsoil, in the vicinity of the site, is a dark brown loam. The site lies at a height of 25m OD and is relatively well drained.

3.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

Aldborough is mentioned in Domesday as having freemen working land held by Harold Godwinson before 1066. The church of St Mary has a suggested Norman nave with the remaining church dating from the 14th century, with later alterations (Pevsner and Wilson 1997, 359). The Green, the centre of the village, has several buildings dating from the 16th century including the 'The Old Red Lion' restaurant (Norfolk Historical Environment Record (HER) No. 12205) and 'Thatched Houses' (Bone's Stores) originally three houses dating from the 15th or 16th centuries (HER 17711). Dating from the 17th century is 'John Brown's House' (HER 16130), in addition The Green is also the location for several Georgian properties. The house under consideration, 'Whistle Stop', dates from c.1850 and displays evidence of later division into three adjacent properties.

Isolated archaeological finds in the village include a Spanish silver REAL coin of 1479-1506 (HER 23246) and a small Early Saxon urn with quadruple chevron decoration found in an adjacent garden at an unknown depth (HER 15189).

Apart from an evaluation at Kent's Loke (Trimble 1998), just to the south of the present site, little archaeological work has been carried out in the village.

4.0 Methodology

The objective of this evaluation was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence or absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

The Brief required that the area of ground covering the footprint of the extension be stripped of topsoil and any archaeological features excavated, while the Project Design stipulated that a single trench be excavated covering the extension area. Upon arrival at the site it became apparent that this method would unnecessarily disrupt ground that, according to the plans of the extension, would otherwise remain undisturbed. Consultation with Norfolk Landscape Archaeology resulted in an amendment to the Project Design whereby only the areas of the actual footing trenches would be excavated.

The total area under consideration constituted 32.8m². This consisted of four north to south trenches (Trenches A-D) measuring 3.1m by 0.8m, along the base of which (joining them all together) ran a single east to west trench (Trench E) measuring 8.2m by 0.8m .

Machine excavation was carried out in 100mm spits with a small hydraulic 360° excavator operated by the client using a 0.80m wide toothless ditching bucket, slightly wider than the required size of the trenches, under constant archaeological supervision. The footing trenches were also excavated by hand, where the space was too restricted for the mechanical digger. All trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.60m.

The trenches were left open after the archaeological inspection and all spoil was retained on site to be used as landscaping material.

Spoil, exposed surfaces and features were scanned with a metal detector. All metal-detected and hand-collected finds, other than those which were obviously modern, were retained for inspection.

All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using NAU *pro forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales and colour and monochrome photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.

Due to the lack of suitable deposits, no environmental samples were taken.

Site conditions were bright and well lit with changeable weather. The soil horizons were dry and firm and adequately drained.

5.0 Results

Introduction

Upon examination it was apparent that Trench A and the western end of Trench E, had been infilled before this most recent phase of building activity (see below), while Trenches B, C and the remainder of Trench E were archaeologically sterile. Only Trench D contained any evidence of cultural activity.

All the trenches however, contained topsoil and subsoil deposits. The topsoil ([1]) was on average 0.25m thick and was a dark brown organic loam garden soil with grass roots and occasional small stones. This overlay a mid grey-brown sandy clay silt subsoil deposit ([2]) containing small stones, charcoal and fragments of brick, mortar and coal. This deposit was still visible at the base of all the trenches when the required depth of 0.60m was reached, the underlying natural was not exposed at any point.

Trench A

The western-most footing trench was found to be already excavated to a depth of 0.60m with a concrete base. This had been installed by a previous resident having obtained planning permission but who had not completed their footings

Trench B

Archaeologically sterile.

Trench C

Archaeologically sterile.

Trench D

The most eastern of the north-south footing trenches (aligned with the back door of the house) c.2.5m west of the east boundary, was found to be heavily disturbed by both a mains electric cable and water pipe travelling down the garden path slightly to the south-east. These cables also cut through the east to west trench at its south-east end.

Subsoil [2] was observed up to the base of the exposed foundations of the house but could not be discerned to be continuing beneath it. The foundations themselves were a mixture of brick and large cobbles, the brick laid in herring-bone pattern in places.

Only against the footings of the house were any finds recovered. A small and shallow rubbish pit ([3]) was observed to have been cut into deposit [2] near the rear door of the property, against the wall. The eastern edge of the pit had been cut by the machine in exposing it. The feature measured c.0.20m in diameter by 0.25m deep and was filled by a mid to dark grey brown silt. Several sherds of highly fired white

glazed pottery and fragments of two glass bottles were visible in the material disturbed by the machine around this feature.

Trench E

The first 2.5m at the western end of this trench had been concreted during a previous phase of building activity. No other evidence of cultural activity was found.

6.0 The Finds

The finds were all recovered from the fill (4) of pit [3]. They comprise two post-medieval hand-blown glass bottles and several pieces of transfer-printed white porcelain post-dating the end of the 18th century and probably 19th century in date (Richenda Goffin pers comm.).

7.0 Conclusions

The deposit encountered at the maximum depth of the excavation contained fragments of building rubble, charcoal and coal and appeared to be a post-medieval make-up layer. This deposit was found against the footings of the house, contained the 19th century pit [3] and appeared to extend to the south. It was noted that the archaeological evaluation which was undertaken to the south of this site also found a similar subsoil deposit which was interpreted at the time as a dump or make-up layer (Trimble, 1998).

It is possible that this deposit of make-up was laid to level the land of the house plot and the land to the south. There was no evidence to suggest whether this was done prior to the construction of the house. The only dating evidence from this deposit was from the pit located near the house and which contained 19th century pottery.

Recommendations for future work based upon this report will be made by Norfolk Landscape Archaeology.

Acknowledgements

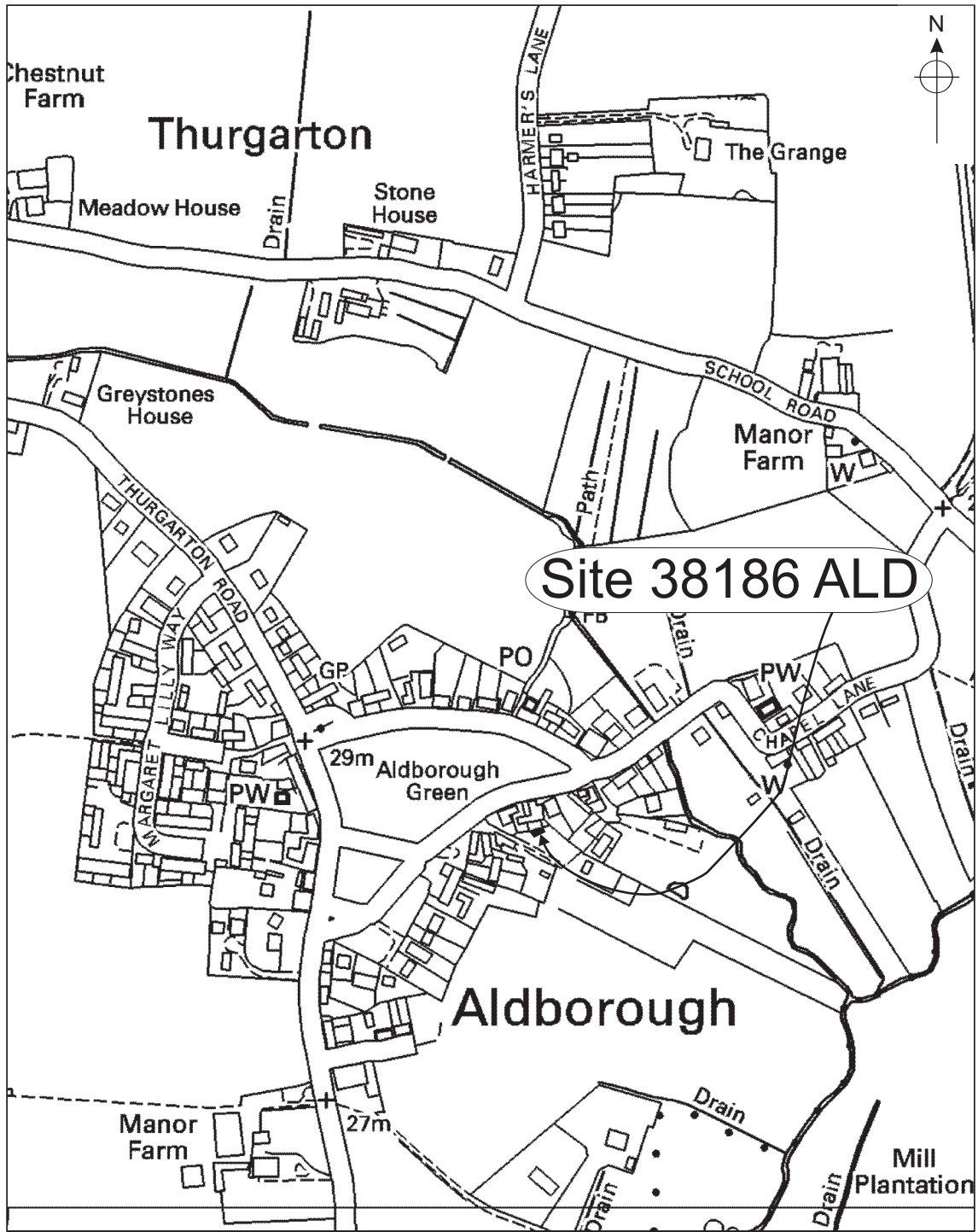
The author would like to thank Mr. Durrant, his partner and his colleague for their support, interest and assistance. The excavation was implemented by Danny Voisey and the author. Information on the post-medieval pottery was provided by Richenda Goffin and HER data was afforded by Jan Allen. The report was illustrated and produced by Maggie Foottit and edited by Alice Lyons.

Bibliography

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Appendix 1: Context Summary

Context	Category	Description	Period
1	Deposit	Topsoil	Modern
2	Deposit	Make-up layer	Post-medieval
3	Cut	Refuse pit	Post-medieval
4	Deposit	Fill of [3]	Post-medieval



0 500m

Figure 1. Site location. Scale 1:5,000



Figure 2. Trench Location. Scale 1:100